

SEVENTEENTH BATTALION.

(AVERY'S BATTALION.)

BY A. C. AVERY, MAJOR.

When Longstreet's Corps moved North, and reunited with Lee's Army in the midst of the battle of the Wilderness, the whole of East Tennessee was immediately occupied by the Federal army, and North Carolina would have been invaded by a separate army, had our Western railroad been built, and possibly, if the high mountains on our Western border had been traversed by such turnpikes as had then been constructed across the mountains in Virginia. After Longstreet went North, most of the troops that were left to guard the frontier of the State were posted from a point almost due west from Asheville to the southwestern border of the State. The country north of Madison County was patrolled at most by a company of cavalry, and picketed by small squads of that company. Major Harvey Bingham had two full companies in camp in Watauga and Captain Price, who had been discharged from the First Cavalry, commanded a small, but active company in Ashe County. These troops rendered efficient service by driving back small predatory bands, who were continually coming into the State from upper East Tennessee. The approaches covered by the borders of Mitchell and Yancey were comparatively unguarded.

General R. B. Vance had been in command of the district composing Western North Carolina; but had been captured while making a raid into Cocke County, Tennessee. Colonel J. B. Palmer, who had been detached from his regiment, the Fifty-eighth North Carolina, then in the Army of Tennessee, at his own request, for the purpose, succeeded General Vance as commander of the district.

Colonel George W. Kirk, who, afterwards acquired an unenviable celebrity by his connection with the Holden-Kirk

NOTE.—This Battalion consisted of two companies of Infantry (A. and C.) and one of Cavalry Co. B, Captain Miller.—Ed.